Riparian Area Multiple Indicator Monitoring

Stalcup, Sarah

The purpose of this project was to determine if grazing outside the prescribed grazing limit negatively effects riparian areas on Big Dominguez creek. This is the third year of the project in cooperation with the Forest Service. Baseline vegetation and stream health data at two locations, the Bird Draw (Dom 1) and Upper Dominguez (Dom 2) allotments on Big Dominguez Creek from 2011 through 2013 were compared. Short and long-term indicators, stubble height, streambank alteration, woody species use (short-term indicators) and, greenline composition, substrate, pool depth/frequency, woody species height class, woody species age class, and woody species use class, and greenline-to-greenline width (all the greenline vegetation ecological status) were used to evaluate a short-duration, high intensity grazing system. Results from 2013 indicate grazing can negatively affect riparian area health when cattle are allowed to graze outside of the prescribed grazing period or when the amount of use exceeds Forest Service grazing standards. The greenline vegetation ecological status score at Dom 1 declined from 75 in spring 2011 to 64 in spring 2013 while scores on Dom 2 were consistent between years. Grazing on Dom 2 was closer to the prescribed levels (standards and duration), while Dom 1 grazing was above the prescribed levels. Data shows the greenline ecological status at Dom 1 is being negatively impacted from livestock grazing. Vegetation on Dom 2 remained stable but did not improve, demonstrating that grazing livestock for the prescribed time and season, and meeting standards are needed to improve riparian vegetation.

Awards Won: